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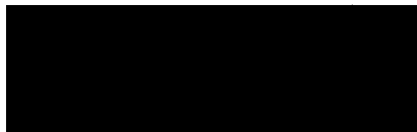
6 May 1972

MEMORANDUM FOR: Dr. Henry A. Kissinger
Assistant to the President for
National Security Affairs

SUBJECT : Quarantine Impact Memorandum

Per the request relayed to me last night (5 May) by General Haig, attached is a memorandum assessing the impact on Hanoi's war effort of an effective denial of sea access to North Vietnam. On General Haig's instructions, we simply assumed that the quarantine here involved is effective and did not discuss counter-measures that might be available to the North Vietnamese to bring in supplies by sea even if Haiphong port itself were interdicted. Also, in this memorandum (and again at General Haig's suggestion), we do not specifically discuss probable Soviet and Chinese reactions to the imposition of a quarantine, though we do note that these reactions would have an important impact on Hanoi's decisions.

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Special Assistant for Vietnamese Affairs

Attachment

SC No. 08334/72, Copy No. 1

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Copy No. 1 - Dr. Kissinger)

Copy No. 2 - General Haig) Hand carried by [redacted] on 6May72

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Copy No. 3 - General Haig) returned and destroyed 19Oct72 (Copy No. 3)

Copy No. 4-- Destroyed

Copy No. 7 - DDI [redacted]

Copy No. 5 - DCI

Copy No. 8 - C/OER/D/I

Copy No. 6 - Mr. Lehman (D/OCI) Copy No. 9 - C/OCI/VTF

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THE IMPACT ON HANOI'S WAR EFFORT OF AN
EFFECTIVE DENIAL OF SEA ACCESS TO NORTH VIETNAM

Introduction

1. North Vietnam relies on ocean transport to bring in over 90 percent of its annual imports, in terms of tonnage. The principal commodities involved are foodstuffs, petroleum, and machinery and equipment. Some of these goods -- especially the POL -- are absolutely vital to Hanoi's war effort. Effective closure of the port of Haiphong and an effective denial by the U.S. of sea access to North Vietnam would seriously disrupt that nation's import patterns and force an extensive revamping of normal transport arrangements. Hanoi would be forced to rely heavily on the overland route from China for the continued import of war materiel and goods necessary to support the economy. This memorandum examines (1) the military and economic impact of such a denial program on North Vietnam's ability to continue its current offensive in the South, and (2) the political implications which such a denial program would be seen to have by Hanoi's leaders.

North Vietnam's Present Import Patterns

2. North Vietnam depends largely on seaborne imports to sustain its domestic economy. During 1971, total North Vietnamese imports amounted to about 2.4 or 2.5 million tons, of which seaborne imports accounted for about 2.2 million tons (6,000 tons a day), an all time high. Of this total, 90 percent came in through Haiphong. The tabulation below shows a general breakdown of seaborne imports in 1971 by major commodities:

<u>Commodity</u>	<u>Thousand Tons</u>	<u>Percent</u>
Food	616	28
Petroleum	390	17
Fertilizer	329	15
General & Miscellaneous	897	40
Metals and Metal Products	143	
Machinery and Equipment	31	
Transportation Equipment	14	
Unidentified	547	
Other	161*	

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TOTAL 2,232 100

* In 1971, 1,612 tons of military aid cargo came in by sea [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] We were able to identify
640 tons which consisted of cement, steel, pipe, a communications
workshop, and a ZIL truck.

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3. The USSR was the principal supplier of food -- 410,000 tons. The Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) sent nearly 135,000 tons. The USSR supplied all the 390,000 tons of petroleum, except for 24,000 tons delivered by the PRC. Only 895 trucks came into North Vietnam by sea in 1971, most of them came from Eastern Europe. Of the 547,000 tons of unidentified cargo, nearly 420,000 tons came from the PRC. This tonnage alone accounted for more than 63 percent of total deliveries from China. Most of the unidentified cargo from the PRC went into Haiphong (279,000 tons); about 125,000 tons went into Vinh. Much of it probably was food.

4. Estimates of rail imports across the China-North Vietnam border are much more tenuous than those for seaborne imports. On the basis of limited evidence, we estimate that rail imports in 1971 amounted to roughly 275,000 tons. Included in this total is machinery and equipment, some food and petroleum, and -- except for POL -- the bulk of Hanoi's military aid (trucks, tanks, weapons, and ammunition).

The Traffic Problem

5. North Vietnam's total overland and seaborne imports for the past year averaged about 6,800 tons per day. If this entire tonnage were to be moved on the overland routes (principally rail, but roads and rivers are also options open to Hanoi), it would dramatically increase the load on the system but it would still be within the system's limits. The confirmed capacity of the railroad, road, and water routes from China totals at least 16,000 tons a day during the dry season and 13,000 tons a day during the wet season, as shown below:

<u>Daily Average</u> <u>Route Capacities</u> ^{a/}	<u>Tons Per Day</u>	
Railroads	9,000	
Roads	5,400	(2,300) ^{b/}
Red River	1,500	
TOTAL	15,900	(12,800)

^{a/} These estimates were established in 1969. Since there have been some improvements made in the overland transportation network, therefore, the estimate is even more conservative than when it was made.

^{b/} Wet season capacity from June through September.

6. The capacity of North Vietnam's rail connections with China alone (9,000 tons per day) is 30 percent greater than the level of total imports in 1971 (6,800 tons per day). The roads and waterways provide an additional cushion that can be used to avoid bottlenecks and to provide additional routes for moving goods from various areas of south China into North Vietnam. Further, the capacity of the overland routes could be expanded to even higher levels by relatively simple measures such as the construction of passing tracks at more frequent intervals on the railroads, and the allocation of more manpower and basic construction materials to road maintenance and improvement.

7. North Vietnam has a substantial inventory of railroad rolling stock and motor vehicles. The rolling stock inventory is estimated at 180 locomotives and 2,500-3,000 freight cars. In addition, China's standard gauge freight cars can operate in North Vietnam on the Hanoi-Dong Dang line, which extends from the border to within seven miles of Hanoi. An alternate route from the border to Hanoi via Kep and Thai Nguyen can also accommodate Chinese standard gauge equipment. China has a large rail inventory -- some 6,000 locomotives and 185,000 freight cars -- which North Vietnam also can draw upon.

8. The current North Vietnamese truck inventory of an estimated 18,000 to 23,000 vehicles is the largest it has ever been. Early 1972 photography revealed some 6,000 trucks dispersed in storage and maintenance facilities -- the largest number of trucks ever noted in storage in North Vietnam.

9. Given Hanoi's sizable inventories of transport equipment and Chinese cooperation, the time required to reorganize traffic movements within North Vietnam as the result of a sea blockade would probably be fairly short. Given the priorities that would be attached to the task, and the considerable experience in keeping traffic moving acquired during the past periods of intensive bombing, it seems unlikely that the flow of the minimum level of imports regarded as necessary by Hanoi would be interrupted for any appreciable length of time. In all probability, the North Vietnamese already have detailed contingency plans to cope with a sea blockade. The disruption of normal economic activity in North Vietnam caused by such a blockade might be severe, but this disruption would affect Hanoi's war making ability only over the fairly long run.

China's Logistical Capabilities

10. In the event of a cessation of normal seaborne imports, North Vietnam's most serious problem would be to establish an alternative flow of POL from China. The entire requirement could be met from China's own production and transportation resources and under these circumstances, would probably come from one or a combination of three major refineries

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at Shanghai, Lan-chou, or Tach'ing. In the event that the USSR continued to be the major supplier, POL would have to move across China to the North Vietnamese border, a distance of about 2,500 miles. For such a movement of POL, about 350 to 400 tank cars in regular operation would be required. This number of cars represents about one percent of the estimated 38,000 tank cars in China's inventory. The burden on China's rail system would be even less if these shipments were to originate entirely or in part from Shanghai and/or Lan-chou.

11. The rail line capacity from any of these refineries in China is more than adequate to handle this traffic in addition to the traffic currently moving over these routes. In terms of logistic capability alone, the Chinese could have a regular flow of POL moving toward North Vietnam well before any shortages would develop because of a cessation of seaborne shipments.

12. If all remaining Soviet, East European, and Chinese seaborne imports of food, fertilizer, machinery, and equipment had to come through north and northeast China, some 2,000 freight cars would be in constant operation. This number of cars represents a little over one percent of the total Chinese freight car inventory. As is the case with POL, the cost of moving these goods by rail would be higher than moving them by sea, but the physical capacity of the overland routes to handle the added burden is unquestionably available.

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Airlift Resources

13. A sustained airlift could be organized to maintain a small flow of high-priority goods to North Vietnam. Available airfields in South China and North Vietnam are near rail lines, major roads, or seaports. The short distance between the Chinese airfields and those in North Vietnam requires little flying time and makes this alternative reasonably economical in the requirement for aircraft.

14. North Vietnam has an insignificant airlift capability. China has about 800 military and civilian transport aircraft, but most of them are old piston aircraft with limited airlift capability supplied by the Soviets. About half the inventory consists of small AN-2s. The large aircraft inventory consists of IL-14s, LI-2s, and a few IL-18s, AN-24s, AN-12s, Viscounts, and Tridents. An airlift could be conducted with these aircraft but it would have to be relatively small-scale since about 140 IL-14s alone would be required to airlift from one-quarter to one-third of North Vietnam's daily seaborne imports. Even this effort would substantially disrupt airline service in China. Airlift shortfalls could, of course, be made up by the Soviet Union which has a large, modern air transport fleet.

Impact on Military Supplies

15. Military supplies represent a relatively minor share of North Vietnam's import burden in terms of tonnage. It is difficult to imagine any circumstance short of a total blockage of all import channels that would physically prevent North Vietnam's Communist Allies from providing a level of resupply adequate to Hanoi's military needs for at least the next six months.

16. A key element in the judgment presented in the paragraph above is the fact that North Vietnam is presently in a very favorable position as regards stockpiles. The Communists accomplish virtually all of their stockpiling of military-related items during the dry season;

thus, an interruption of imports at this late stage of the current season would be substantially mitigated by large stockpiles already in place in southern Laos, Cambodia, and South Vietnam, as well as strategic reserves in North Vietnam.

17. Throughout the war in Indochina, Communist forces have rigorously adhered to a stockpiling doctrine that calls for supply reserves to exceed anticipated requirements by a large margin. Food, weapons, and ammunition stocks are established at three distinct echelons. Combat stockpiles are maintained in all operational areas to meet day-to-day requirements. Campaign stocks are stored in more secure areas, but at locations relatively close to potential combat areas. Finally, strategic stockpiles to meet various contingencies are established in base areas having a high degree of security. Strategic stockpiles have been established principally in North Vietnam and Laos. Campaign stockpiles have been established widely throughout the enemy's Laotian and Cambodian base areas and in the more secure areas within South Vietnam. Combat stocks are kept at many locations inside South Vietnam.

18. We do not have firm intelligence on the aggregate size of the enemy's stockpiles in Indochina. From what we know of his logistics planning doctrine, however, the enemy's desired strategic stockpiles would approximate 12 months' resupply requirements, campaign stockpiles six months' requirements, and combat stockpiles three months' requirements -- a total of 21 months of resupply requirements. Current stocks probably do not equal 21 months because the dry season effort to move large quantities of supplies to both South Vietnam and Cambodia is still underway. However, stock levels almost certainly are substantial and probably represent at a minimum, 12 months' resupply requirements. For example, COMINT in January 1972, revealed that more than 4,500 tons of supplies were stored in eight storage areas in the Laotian Panhandle. More recently, a 16 April intercept revealed that nearly 1,700 tons of supplies, including 600 tons of arms and ammunition, were in storage areas near the Laos-Cambodian border.

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COMINT also indicates a similar picture in the North Vietnamese Panhandle. One late 1971 intercept revealed more than 5,000 tons of supplies stored in several areas in Quang Binh Province. Subsequent intercepts indicated several thousand tons of ordnance stored in the Vinh area.

Impact on the Economy

19. If the regime moves quickly to transfer imports from seaborne to overland routes, disruption to the economy -- while significant -- could still be a manageable problem for Hanoi. Industry, drawing on reserve stocks, could continue to function for several months, without outside help. With minor exceptions, North Vietnam's industry does not require large imports of raw materials. Only relatively small amounts of gypsum for cement production, pyrites for domestic fertilizer output, and raw cotton for the textile industry are needed. Construction projects typically are supplied with materials well in advance but imports of machinery to mesh with construction schedules may be upset. Lack of spare parts for diverse makes of foreign machinery also would pose at least temporary difficulties.

20. POL stocks are presently at a little over 120,000 tons -- about a three-months' supply. A total disruption of POL supplies would very quickly be felt in the civilian economy, but if 20 percent of this amount were earmarked for military purposes, it would meet more than six months' requirements even at the high rate of POL usage by the North Vietnamese Army since the current offensive began.

21. Food represents a major import item for North Vietnam. Identified food imports in 1971 were about 600,000 tons and in view of the poor 1971 harvest it seems likely that Hanoi expects even larger imports this year. These are currently running at 20 percent above last year's volume. A temporary cessation of food imports could require a drawdown in stocks or a reduction in the food ration. But, such restrictions would soon be eased with the completion of the spring harvest now getting underway. In any case, the food requirement for the military effort is only partially met from North Vietnam. There are major sources of rice in both Cambodia and South Vietnam available to the enemy.

Summary of the Physical Problems Facing Hanoi Under Blockade Conditions

22. The diversion of North Vietnam's seaborne import traffic to overland routes via China is well within the physical capabilities of the transport system of China, the USSR, and North Vietnam -- assuming that North Vietnam's rails and roads exiting from China are not themselves effectively closed. The immediate diversion of seaborne traffic would involve some 50 to 100,000 tons of supplies; about half of this could be diverted to Fort Bayard in China for overland movement to North Vietnam. The remaining tonnage would be recalled to Soviet ports to make the overland transit of China.

23. If the stoppage of seaborne imports lasted only a few weeks there would be little impact on North Vietnam's capability to continue prosecuting the war at the current high levels. In anticipation of a more prolonged stoppage, however, it is likely that Hanoi would immediately initiate more stringent rationing of food and petroleum to stretch out supplies. Stockpiles of essential economic and military goods are probably adequate to weather even a two-three month sea quarantine, particularly if China began immediately to move high volumes of supplies overland.

24. If the seaborne imports are blocked indefinitely, and the overland system seems threatened Hanoi would almost certainly make drastic cutbacks in civilian uses of essential goods. Given its stockpiles and the relatively small quantities of supplies required to continue to prosecute the war, however, Hanoi would not perforce be required to call off major military operations for many months, though continuing the military struggle under such circumstances would clearly involve a major political decision.

Hanoi's Political and Psychological Reaction

25. Closure of the port and seacoast to imports would produce an important psychological reaction in Hanoi.* Its depth and its significance for the North Vietnamese war effort would depend on Hanoi's assessment of several major factors related to the closure. The factors include the following:

26. How the closure was accomplished: If the port was put out of action through destruction of its key installations, the shock produced in Hanoi would be great. Although the North Vietnamese almost certainly have included the possibility of the destruction of the port facilities in their calculus of potential reactions against their offensive in South Vietnam, and have probably somewhat conditioned themselves psychologically for such an act, they may have concluded that destruction of the port was nonetheless an unlikely U.S. response. There would thus be genuinely great anger in Hanoi. Following the Haiphong raid of 15/16 April, [REDACTED] 25X1X4 [REDACTED] Hanoi officials were greatly upset at the destruction of facilities that took "years to build." That raid appears on balance, however, to have steeled their already strong will to persist and we would conclude that the continuing attacks on these facilities would net out in the same direction unless, as discussed below, it was clear that Hanoi could not depend on alternate methods of importing the materials needed for its war effort.

27. If the port were closed primarily by means of a blockade the shock effect in Hanoi would be less, partly because the facilities would remain intact, but largely because it would be some time before it was clear to the North Vietnamese that the closure was really going to be effective. Initially, in fact, Hanoi would probably tend to doubt that political conditions in the U.S. would permit the Administration to sustain a blockade for long. Moreover, the North Vietnamese might well expect

*An immediate and violent North Vietnamese propaganda reaction against the closure is, of course, to be expected along with domestic efforts in North Vietnam to use the action to spur heightened popular support of the Communist war effort. This predictable reaction is not discussed at length in this paper.

a strong counterreaction, at least politically, from the Soviet Union whose shipping would be directly affected. Before making any major political or military moves of their own, the North Vietnamese would probably wait to see if the U.S. Government could take the political heat of domestic protest and to ascertain the extent or degree of support forthcoming from Moscow and Peking. The North Vietnamese would also expect some outcry, albeit ineffectual, from the other states whose ships were involved.

28. Earnest of U.S. determination: At the present time, Hanoi probably considers its offensive in South Vietnam has not yet fully tested the remaining depth and durability of the Administration's commitment to the South Vietnamese Government. Effective closure of the port either by blockade or destruction would be read by the North Vietnamese as a fresh, strong signal that the Administration was still strongly committed to South Vietnam. Once Hanoi had concluded that the Administration could weather the domestic and international heat over a blockade of the port (perhaps a month-long process) it would assume that the U.S. was fully capable of taking even stronger steps against the North Vietnamese war effort, certainly including attempts to block land transportation links with China by air interdiction near the Chinese border.

Effect on the Communist War Effort

29. Although the foregoing factors would be significant elements in governing Hanoi's reaction, the basic political, psychological, and military response of the North Vietnamese would be conditioned primarily by their assessment of the impact of the port's closure on their war effort in South Vietnam. For example, the closure of Haiphong would unquestionably hearten South Vietnamese morale. If that morale lift, in turn, improved the GVN's battlefield position and prospects, the new southern situation (not just the closing of the port) would weigh heavily in Hanoi's calculations. We quickly get, therefore, into psychological imponderables, but over the years the North Vietnamese have consistently demonstrated that their will to persist politically and psychologically in the war is not easily shaken. They have proved willing to endure every adverse military measure taken against their homeland, so long as it did not seriously hamper their battlefield capabilities in South Vietnam. It was only when these capabilities were degraded (as apparently occurred before the Hanoi-US understanding of 1968 which led to the bombing halt south of the 19th parallel) that the North Vietnamese have proved willing to make some policy concessions.

30. In view of the careful, deliberate, more or less all-out preparations Hanoi has made for the current offensive, and the critical way the offensive hangs on the continued North Vietnamese ability to supply large quantities of heavy, sophisticated war materiel to the battlefield, we conclude that Hanoi almost certainly weighed possible US reactions which might limit its ability to continue necessary logistic support of the battlefield. Although, as indicated above, the North Vietnamese may have concluded such a US reaction unlikely, they almost certainly estimated that, by itself, closure of the port would not necessarily erode their ability to support the current offensive or subsequent major operations in South Vietnam at a later date.

31. Thus, we think it very unlikely that closure of the port and the seacoast alone would cause Hanoi to make a political decision to scale down its offensive or to make any substantive concessions in its negotiating terms. Even if the North Vietnamese regarded the Administration's action as a signal of intent to take further major steps against the North to halt the offensive, we think it likely that Hanoi would wait to see whether such steps were actually taken and judge their impact on the war effort before reassessing its offensive in the South or altering its political strategy.

32. We think this would almost certainly be the North Vietnamese reaction if their offensive in the South were still rolling along in high gear with little sign that they could be stopped on the battlefield. If the offensive had bogged down, perhaps with Hue still in friendly hands after a strong test of the city's defenses and with the defenses of Saigon still intact and strong, Hanoi might be inclined to take a more serious view of its prospects consequent to the closure of the ports. In this case, the North Vietnamese might decide to limit further offensive actions and return to a smaller level of warfare, hoping during the rainy season to hold the gains made while preparing

for renewed major operations in the fall or more likely the spring of 1973. Even in this situation, however, the North Vietnamese would be unlikely to make meaningful concessions in their terms for ending the war.

33. Although Hanoi's political determination would probably remain fully intact, the North Vietnamese could not, of course, be certain of the effect of the closure of the port on the long range materiel commitment to the war effort of their Russian and Chinese Allies. In the event that the port and seacoast alone were closed, Chinese interests would not be vitally affected. Peking, in fact, would obtain much greater control of North Vietnamese actions as a result of Hanoi's subsequent dependence on overland supply links with China. At least over the short term, we see no overriding political reason why China would not utilize the land links for supply movements as requested by the North Vietnamese.

34. The Soviet Union, of course, would be more vitally affected, since its merchant shipping provides a major link with Hanoi. Closure of the port and seacoast alone, however, would almost certainly not dissuade the Soviets from continuing to supply Hanoi via overland links through China. Over the short term, at least, political frictions between Moscow and Peking would be unlikely to affect the land resupply process.

Conclusion

35. In the final analysis, the decision on North Vietnam's military and political policy in Indochina would be made by the nine members of the Lao Dong Politburo in Hanoi. To date, the Politburo has always seemed to act as if it were convinced that its political staying power was greater than that of any given US administration. Closing off North Vietnam's sea-borne imports -- i. e., the imposition, by whatever means, of an effective quarantine -- would clearly be a major act the Politburo would have to ponder carefully, weighing the acts material consequences and its import as a political signal. Though it would almost certainly be impressed and discomfited by such an act, the Politburo's track record of past performance in adversity does not suggest that this act, of itself, would make Hanoi change its course in any short time frame. Instead -- particularly if it viewed events on southern battlefields as moving in an encouraging direction -- the Politburo would almost certainly wait a bit to see if it could weather the new situation: it would have to be convinced by actions, not words, that the US Government in an election year could persist in such a course, it would want to see what physical support it could anticipate from the USSR and China, what counterpressures the Soviets and Chinese could be induced to bring to bear on Washington, and how effective these pressures might prove to be. Hanoi would want to see how the physical steps taken to counter the quarantine's impact were likely to work out, and -- perhaps above all -- it would want to see if it could not press on to further battlefield and political success in South Vietnam. Hanoi's subsequent course of policy action would be determined by how Hanoi's leaders -- not outsiders --

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read the results of the Politburo's soundings in the areas such as those described above.

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